

Çakar, Emre (2019). "Spaces of Sanctuary in Edwin Muir's Poems of Trauma, Exile and Loss". *Uludağ University Faculty of Arts and Sciences Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 20, Iss. 36, p. 425-442.

DOI: 10.21550/sosbilder.415010

SPACES OF SANCTUARY IN EDWIN MUIR'S POEMS OF TRAUMA, EXILE AND LOSS*

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Sending Date: April 2018


Acceptance Date: July 2018

ABSTRACT

Trauma studies have recently explored the influence of historical event and circumstance on art and how trauma is portrayed; for example, Modernism represents the embodiment of the theme of trauma, alienation and loneliness after the First World War. This connection is also discernible in the poetry of Edwin Muir who was born in 1887 and witnessed various great events of the twentieth century. However, Muir's sense of trauma was not limited to only WWI, but the loss of people and places influenced his verse as well. The theme of loss and migration led Muir to a mythical and nostalgic past as a response to trauma. Due to migration to another city, his struggle with agony was blended with certain places; hence, his poetry elaborates on spatial aspects. In this regard, as it often does lead to feelings of nostalgia, trauma becomes central to understanding Muir's poetry. In the centre of Muir's trauma related to his abiding sense of nostalgia is a concentration on places, both historical and mythical. Therefore, this paper will explore the main connection between nostalgia and space in relation to Muir's personal and collective trauma.

Key words: *Edwin Muir, trauma, space, exile, nostalgia*

* This paper is a revised and extended version of my presentation at "the 16th International Cultural Studies Symposium: Narratives of Trauma."

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Edwin Muir'in Travma, Sürgün ve Kayıp Şiirlerinde Sığınma Mekânları

ÖZET

Son yıllarda travma alanında yapılan çalışmalar, travmanın nasıl tanımlandığını, tarihsel olay ve şartların sanat üzerindeki etkisini araştırmaktadır; örneğin, Modernizm I. Dünya Savaşı sonrası ortaya çıkan travma, yabancılaştırma ve yalnızlık temalarını yansıtır. Bu bağlantı 1887 yılında doğmuş ve yirminci yüzyılın pek çok büyük olayına tanıklık etmiş Edwin Muir'in şiirinde de görülebilir. Fakat Muir'in travma anlayışı sadece I. Dünya Savaşı ile sınırlı değildir; aynı zamanda, insanların ve mekânların kaybı da onun şiirini etkilemiştir. Travmayla birlikte, kayıp ve göç olayları da Muir'i mitik ve nostaljik bir geçmişe yönelmiştir. Başka bir şehre göç ettiği için şairin çektiği ıstırap, belirli mekânlarla özdeşleşmiştir, bu sebeple Muir'in şiiri mekânsal özellikler üzerinde durur. Bu bakımdan, genellikle nostalji duygularına yol açtığı için travma Muir'in şiirini anlamak için merkezi bir rol oynar. Muir'in nostalji anlayışıyla bağlantılı travmasının merkezinde hem tarihsel hem de mitik bir mekânsal yoğunlaşma yer alır. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma, Muir'in kişisel ve genel travmasına bağlı olarak nostalji ve mekân arasındaki başlıca bağlantıyı inceleyecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Edwin Muir, travma, mekân, sürgün, nostalji*

Introduction

The significance of historical event to poetry either explicitly or implicitly is obvious as art can be seen as the secret witness of history. This characteristic of poetry becomes more obvious during years of war and violence; the more powerful the experience, the more significant the impact on writing will be. Sometimes, art contains and covers the wounds of the author which might be both personal and national, and sometimes universal. In its Greek meaning, the word trauma originally refers to “an injury or wound to a living body caused by the application of external force or violence” (“Trauma,” 1993). However, the term was broadened by psychology and psychoanalysis. It began to be used as a metaphor for the emotional wounds caused by both personal and public events. In this sense, trauma studies often concern those wounds, especially of violence; for example, trauma studies developed from

research about events such as the Holocaust that have left hugely significant traces in collective history. E. Ann Kaplan claims that there are still many living their daily lives in terror “after centuries of displacement and attempted annihilation” (2005: 1). Kaplan adds, this daily experience also belongs to trauma studies, and she “extend[s] the concept of trauma to include suffering terror” (1). The radical changes of the 1930s clearly left their mark on contemporary writers as can be observed in Muir’s poetry.

Creative writing is clearly one way of coping with trauma because “[t]raumatic memories are the unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences, which need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language” (van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995: 176). In this regard, writing, in other words, narrative language, may help heal emotional wounds. In terms of the traumatic state, Pierre Janet states that there are two kinds of memories, traumatic and narrative (ordinary) memory (qtd. in van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995: 163). The traumatised individuals tell a story very briefly for this is the way ordinary memory functions (163). It often takes much time to “tell” it from a “traumatic memory” because traumatic memory is “inflexible” and “invariable” and a “solitary activity” (163). In order to fight against the sense of abandonment, the traumatised must do something to defeat it, “the traumatized person has to return to the memory often in order to complete it” (176). One of the most effective ways to return to and fight against trauma is by writing which has a soothing and healing power, as in the examples of Franz Kafka and Oğuz Atay who wrote letters to their oppressive fathers. Wounded authors may write to heal, forgive and forget so that the memory of trauma can be transformed into ordinary or narrative memory.

Space and trauma are, moreover, usually interconnected by nature. Although space has often been considered to be in the area of geography or urban studies, it has recently been discussed critically by theorists from various fields such as sociology of space, literary

geographies, imagined geographies and geopolitics. However, the relation between trauma and space has hardly been evaluated in spite of their interrelation; for example, exile is one of the powerful reasons that paves the way to trauma, especially for those who are forced to leave their homeland. As a result, homeland turns into a mythical place which is, according to Tuan, “an intellectual construct” (1977: 99). It is a mental process because one must deal with difficulties through mental processes to overcome severe emotional distress. When homeland is abandoned due to external forces, everything that is associated with homeland is situated so far away that the traumatized individual cannot reach it, because the centre “is not a particular point on the earth’s surface; it is a concept in mythic thought” (150). In this regard, many individuals create their own centre by distilling memories from childhood days. However, once they fail to deal with difficulty, the centre is transformed into an Eden-like mythic place. Hence, serious mental anxiety has an intense effect on trauma in connection with homeland places.

The possibility of forsaking a place may create restlessness and fear, because the fear of the unknown conflicts with one’s fidelity to homeland. In such a process, the homeland is altered to a sacred place which must be safely protected. Even the shadow of a small threat to the sacred place may create a sense of fear; in this regard, obscurity is equal to uneasiness. Mircea Eliade states, “In archaic and traditional societies, the surrounding world is conceived as a microcosm. At the limits of this closed world begins the domain of the unknown, of the formless” (1961: 37). Within the limits of the surrounding world one feels content, but what if one transgresses the limits of the familiar or sacred space? He/she will step into “the unknown and dangerous region of the demons, the ghosts, the dead and of foreigners – in a word, chaos or death or night” (38). That is the absolute fear of the unknown, and the exposure to that dreadful emotion may create a sense of mental disorder. However, writing is a way to cope with disturbance so as to restore health. Muir, in this sense, can be seen to write to heal both his

personal and collective wounds by restoring his idealised past, his Eden throughout his poetry. His writing enabled him to survive not only in his daily life, but to become a significant figure of English literature. The effect of traumatic events on his writing will be explored in this paper from the perspective of the use of space.

Edwin Muir is one of the significant figures of twentieth-century English poetry. Although he belonged to the same era as some other major poets such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, Muir is still considered to be a remarkable literary figure of his day. What makes Muir significant is his use of universal themes frequently employed by poets from ancient times to his own age. Elizabeth Hubarman summarizes Muir's themes as "the struggle between good and evil in individual, in society, in universe; the loss of innocence and the quest for its recovery; the nature of human destiny; the destructiveness of time; the enduring joy and power of love" (1971: 4). Hubarman adds that Muir discovers those themes in "contemporary events and in his own dreams, he always recasts both borrowings and findings to fit his particular vision" (4). Placing himself in such a society, world or universe, Muir employs these themes by merging them with images from his childhood with a broad sense of collective trauma related to the 'meaningless' historical events of the twentieth century. At this point, the strong connection between space and trauma is revealed in his poetry, for Muir's sense of nostalgia began with his expulsion from Orkney.

Fall from Eden

Trauma may influence individuals or people at any time, but the most influential type of trauma takes place during childhood because it is the period of most vulnerability in which people are most influenced, especially emotionally. Once childhood is over, there is a tendency to idealise the past; the house is, perhaps, one of the easily remembered elements from that period. Gaston Bachelard states, "we feel calmer and more confident when in the old home, in the house we were born in, than we do in the houses in the streets where we have only lived as

transients” (1994: 43). We feel peaceful, because it is the place we know, but the more we go away from it, the more chaotic our life becomes. Therefore, the old house becomes a symbol of tranquillity which enables us to overcome present traumas.

It is possible to analyse Muir’s writing from Bachelard’s space theory about house and its psychological representation in connection with Muir’s “Childhood.” Bachelard asserts that “[a]ll great, simple images reveal a psychic state. The house, even more than the landscape, is a “psychic state” (1994: 72). The main argument stems from the fact that the first image from childhood is the house; therefore, various emotional conditions are transferred to the image of house. Muir experienced childhood trauma that originated from his moving from Orkney, which left traumatic marks on him, because the recollection of his childhood and family centres upon the notions of immortality and eternity. He says, “[w]hen I was a child I must have felt that they [my family] had always been there, and I with them” (1954: 25). He adds, “[o]ur first childhood is the only time in our lives when we exist within immortality, and perhaps all our ideas of immortality are influenced by it” (25). It is not surprising that the opening poem of his *First Poems* is “Childhood” in which the narrator speaks about a child. In this poem, a boy lies “upon the sunny hill” that is close to “his father’s house” (1960: 19):

Long time he lay upon the sunny hill,
To his father’s house below securely bound.
Far off the silent, changing sound was still,
With the black islands lying thick around. (1960: 19)

In the first stanza, the first sentence suggests two different meanings: first, the child’s house is “securely bound” to the hill; second, he is bound to the house. In each case, the child is portrayed in a secure, eternal and timeless landscape, which is a direct reference to an Eden-like aspect of childhood. In contrast to the sunny hills, there lie “black islands” that symbolize the dangerous world outside. The harmony of childhood is repeated in the second stanza; the child “saw

each separate height, each vaguer hue” as if in a unity with nature (1960: 19). At the end of the poem, that “from the house his mother calls his name” suggests that the child belongs to his house, to this eternal landscape which represents his childhood in which he is protected from the threats of the outer world (19). Through the images of “sunny hill,” “tranquil air,” and “smooth evening sound” of the childhood years, the peaceful atmosphere of the poem adds tranquillity to the tone of the poem leaving a serenely joyful impression on the reader.

As mentioned above, the more one goes away from the centre, the more the fear of unknown sticks to him/her, which accordingly creates disillusionment. It was the same for Muir whose first image of disappointment belongs to the stage of his life in another city of Scotland, Glasgow. His settlement to a new city led to frustration, for Glasgow was bigger and more industrial compared to Orkney. Moving from the pastoral life of Orkney to the industrial city of Glasgow at the age of fourteen was a clearly shocking event in Muir’s life. For him, Glasgow meant the end of his happy and heavenly days; during the following year, terribly weakened by the city, his father passed away. Then, Muir got a job as an office-boy in a law office which was boring and his life was dreary. In his *An Autobiography*, he writes about his Glasgow days;

My first years in Glasgow were wretched. The feeling of degradation continued, but it became more and more blind; I did not know what made me unhappy, nor that I had come into chaos. We had lived comfortably enough in Orkney, mainly on what we grew; but here everything had to be bought and paid for; there was so much money and so much food and clothes and warmth and accommodation to be had for it: that was all. (1954: 92-3)

Muir’s feeling of calmness is associated with Orkney in general where he felt himself content, yet Glasgow ruined his idealised world and left traumatic traces which formed his poetry by adding the themes of loss and nostalgia. Those happy days were over; Muir fell from the garden of Eden with his family. The traumatic experience of fall can be

observed in “The Gate.” The speaker portrays the confident and happy childhood, “We sat, two children, warm against the wall / Outside the towering stronghold of our fathers / That frowned its stern security down upon us,” which reminds us the merry tone of the poem, “Childhood” (1960: 110). However, in the middle, the course of the poem changes with the line, “And made them strange as gods. We sat that day.” According to Huberman, this part is “the entry into tragedy” (1972: 76). The catastrophe arises from the clash between two different places; on the one hand, nostalgic space embodies childhood and nostalgia, on the other hand, exterior space represents anxiety and chaos.

The second half of the poem is marked by the gloomy tone that is produced by the contradictory atmosphere of outward space which is far away from their safe homeland. The two children come together again, but this time the world of adults transforms them into “outcasts,” “castaways thrown upon an empty shore,” thus “all seemed old / And dull and shrunken” (1960: 110). The setting of the poem develops from a sanctuary space into a dreadful fortress. Ironically, the gate is open, and the children are enclosed in a terrifying space; “We were outside, alone. / And then behind us the huge gate swung open” (110). In the end, “there is only a confluence of painful feelings: shame, revulsion, disillusion, loneliness, and dread of the unknown” (Huberman 1972: 76). And the two children were tragically sent into exile leaving all sense of beauty behind; then they lost their innocence and became adults. The fortress is, thus, transferred into a sacred place for the children which is safe and strong, but fear is aroused from the space beyond the limits of their stronghold.

Muir’s childhood days take on a mythic quality which marks a rite of passage from childhood innocence into adulthood, as the speaker of “The Myth” states, “My childhood all a myth / Enacted in a distant isle” (1960: 144). This theme can be observed in his third poetry collection, *Journeys and Places* published in 1937. There are both “journey” and “place” poems; one of the most significant is “The

Solitary Place.” As written in a letter by Muir to his friend, Stephen Spender, “The Solitary Place” deals with the theme of “the modern historical view of the world, in which there is no reality except the development of humanity” (qtd. in Butter 1966: 141). Told in the first person, the poem is written in the form of a monologue, and it portrays the loneliness of the persona after the loss of innocence. A monologue is a very long speech delivered by a particular person; in this respect, monologue enables the speaker to tell his traumatic sorrows in confidence. The hopeless speaker begins with a statement of mourning, “O I shall miss / With one small breath these centuries / Of harvest-home uncounted!” (1960: 80). Then, he emphasises the elements of the old country life that includes “mead,” “bread,” and “mounds of grain.” However, as the world is changing drastically, so will the fields. The speaker is not sure about his future; if he could return, he says, “their harvest would be strange” (80). He longs for the pastoral life of “the lint-white stubble plain” with “summer-painted birds” (80). Through each loss in his life, the speaker feels the fragmentation of the self; he loses his homeland with birds and flowers and then his brother and sister along with the house where all his nostalgia is embodied. At the end of the poem, the speaker finds himself alienated and alone:

O then I am alone,
I, many and many in one,
A lost player upon a hill
On a sad evening when the world is still,
The house empty, brother and sister gone
Beyond the reach of sight, or sound of any cry,
Into the bastion of the mind, behind the shutter of the eye. (1960: 81)

The exiled and fragmented self finds himself alone on the top of a hill on a sad evening; in his reception of the world, the speaker knows that the past is impossible to reach, and that unattainable purpose makes him divided and wounded too. The course of Muir’s poetry changes from a personal standpoint to an objective position, as Huberman claims: “although most of *First Poems* are self-centered and subjective ... Muir gradually turns outward, in succeeding volumes, to a greater

objectivity and to a concern with all men” (1971: 5). In the 1940s, his poetry already reflected some other themes from a more universal point of view such as war and violence. In this sense, the effect of WWII can be traced in his poetry more clearly.

Years of War

Regarding the relationship between trauma and historical event, war stands as the most influential factor among events; war has always caused, either personal or general, wound which lies at the centre of trauma. As Cathy Caruth stated in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, trauma is “always the story of a wound that cries out,” but not “the simple illness of a wounded psyche” (1996: 4). At this point, trauma cannot be described as a simple illness because the wound can stem both from a personal tragedy such as a childhood event or a deathly experience and a public catastrophe such as a natural disaster or war. Those affairs leave deep marks on the personal and collective memories. In the matter of the Second World War, Muir and his friends still felt anxiety in the air; “the war, the future of Europe, on which our hopes were beginning to fix themselves, the habits and traditions of different lands. The terrible memories which the refugees brought with them became more distant and bearable as they fell into the mould of a story, often repeated” (1954: 250). In this regard, his fourth poetry collection, *The Narrow Place* (1943) revolves around war and refugees as can be observed in certain poems such as “The Wayside Station,” “The River,” and “The Refugees.”

Muir’s *The Narrow Place* conveys the sense of collective trauma caused by the Second World War by means of focusing on the traumatized individual. J.C. Hall characterises Muir’s conception of literature as not a shallow artistic activity, rather his poetry is connected with “philosophical, psychological and historical implications” (1956: 17). Muir did not actively take part in the war, but he was intensely influenced by it. “The Wayside Station” revolves around the theme of war, but rather in an “oblique” way because there are no direct images

of “death or destruction” (Huberman 1971: 110). The setting of the poem is a rural landscape with a farm and the speaker from this place directly portrays the miserable atmosphere. This time, the pastoral country which was once idealised was depicted as a gloomy place. In the first stanza, the first image is of smoke that is “torn from the fuming engine / crawling across the field in serpent sorrow” (1960: 92). It is the beginning of “the struggling day” which shines, but it does not warm up for “its warm hearth is far off” (92).

In the second stanza, the speaker still watches “the farmstead on the hill,” and a sense of unwillingness is recognized in the farmstead through the line “Here is day again” which signifies the sameness of each day. In such a situation, the cattle are portrayed as “sad,” the farmer “groaning” and the day for people “a familiar ache” which can be felt deep in body (1960: 92). The pessimistic air is underlined through the image of a “dark house,” and at the end of the stanza, the lovers part. Until the third stanza ends, the reason for the sadness in the farm is not resolved, nor is why the lovers part explained. In the final part of the stanza, it is revealed that it is the “stream” which is lonely like the people of the farm. And the stream “rode through darkness” and “starts its winding journey / through the day and time and war and history” (93). The image of the smoke in the first stanza is completed with the image of lonely winding stream which connects the trauma of war to the individual. Now the speaker must deal with a universal issue and his loneliness merges into a collective sadness. The pastoral country is no more a peaceful place through the brook that carries the heaviness of centuries full of sorrows of war and violence.

On the other hand, Muir showed awareness of the issue of trauma that derives from historical events. Its traces can be observed in the poem, “The River” where the lonely stream turns into “the silent stream” which shows “the trained terrors” and “the well-practiced partings” as if it explained the meaning of the stream of “The Wayside Station.” “The River” is rendered by a third person speaker who illustrates the terrible situation caused by the Second World War. In the

first part, an old woman and her grandson with a rifle are introduced. This soldier “looks across / From this new world to hers and tires to find / Some ordinary words that share her sorrow” (1960: 93). In the second part, the melancholic atmosphere continues; the speaker illustrates a picture of war that contains “a blackened field,” “a burning wood,” and “a bridge that stops half-way” (93). Then, the setting of the poem changes into an urban landscape; “Darkness falls, / The stream flows through the city” and this time the destructive results of war are identified with the city images. In such a city, “The houses stir and pluck their roofs and walls” (93). Visiting now Europe, the stream shows how “The disciplined soldiers come to conquer nothing, / March upon emptiness and do not know / Why all is dead and life has hidden itself” (94). The stream shows that the whole world along with Europe is confined to such a meaninglessness that sheds darkness over all people, especially the refugees whose hapless situation is depicted in the poem, “The Refugees.”

“The Refugees” is a symbolic title representing a group of people who are forced to leave their own land; in other words, refugee symbolizes the change of space which is the cause of trauma. The poem is narrated in the first-person plural which enables the reader to share the collective trauma. In the first stanza, the coming of “the Stranger” is told through the metaphor of a crack that “ran through [their] hearthstone long ago, / And from the fissure we watched gently grow / The tame domesticated danger” (1960: 95). In the second stanza, the conformist speaker looks at the refugees, “The always homeless, / Nationless and nameless” while sitting “by the fire or in the window-seat” (95). Then, even the houses are not safe, “[they] saw [their] houses falling / Wall after wall behind us,” which is [their] punishment” (96). At the end of the poem, the speaker inevitably accepts the fact that they are all exiled; in other words, homeless people have been exiled from their houses. Therefore, the speaker says, “homelessness is ours / And shall be others” (96). War can destroy anyone and anywhere without making a distinction; “Tenement roofs and towers / Will fall

upon the kind and the unkind / Without election” (96). Muir did not feel content with the condition that made him alienated; he writes, “I am taking notes for something like a description of myself, done in general outline, not in detail, not as a story, but as an attempt to find out what a human being is in this extraordinary age which depersonalises everything” (qtd. in Macrae 1995: 211). Cutting off many from their homeland, the war left people estranged leaving traumatic effects on them who were not happy neither in city nor in country; sadness pervades every place.

Apart from the poems of war, Muir also explores the theme of a nostalgic past by showing how misery transformed the country and harmed the idealised place of the past. In “The Good Town” the speaker says, “Look at it well. This was the good town once / Known everywhere, with streets of friendly neighbours” (1960: 183). It was such a secure town that people could leave their doors unlocked. Moreover, “the yard behind was sweet with grass and flowers” (183). Those were happy days, when passed quickly, but “[i]t was not time that brought these [bad] things upon [them], / But these two wars that trampled on [them] twice” (185). After the wars, “The land looked all awry, / The roads ran crooked and the light fell wrong,” and the speaker identifies the town as “the fine new prison” in which “The house-doors shut and barred, the frightened faces / Peeping round corners, secret police, informers, / And all afraid of all” (185). The speaker, as an old citizen of the town, reveals, “That old life was easy / And kind and comfortable; but evil is restless / And gives no rest to the cruel or the kind” (186). In the end, the speaker approves,

... when evil comes
All things turn adverse, and we must begin
At the beginning, heave the groaning world
Back in its place again, and clamp it there.” (1960: 186)

The world is turned into a groaning state through the coming of evil; the poem suggests coming back to the place where it had begun, the Eden, because Eden turned out to be a metaphor for a lost place of a

peaceful and nostalgic past. At this point, Hoffman explains that Muir’s “Adamic condition of life, this spare, islanded Eden in the northern seas, was only the beginning for Muir, the beginning which he spent the rest of his life trying to return” (1967: 226). In the end, he named his seventh poetry collection *One Foot in Eden* (1956). According to Butter, “[t]he poems in this volume are mostly about the road with all its dangers, about the gains as well as the losses resulting from the fated departure from Eden. The tone is not nostalgic, not backward-looking except in the emphasis on the need to remember what we were in order to become what we essentially are” (257). Once again, Muir turns to the idealised past in “One Foot in Eden” in which he concentrates on “the concept that time and the timeless, evil and good, suffering joy somehow meet in harmony here and now” (Huberman 1971: 209). In the opening lines of the poem, the speaker strongly states that he stands “One foot in Eden still” and “look[s] across the other land” (1960: 227). However, there are still fields “that [they] have planted / So long with crops of love and hate,” and it is impossible to separate good and bad, love and hate, “corn and tare.” Furthermore, “Evil and good stand thick around / In the fields of charity and sin” (227). Therefore, the present condition for the poet is not peaceful any more, instead it is the embodiment of the traumatized situation of people.

The problem of turning back to romanticised days is solved in a famous poem from the same collection, “The Horses.” One of the ways to cope with the traumatic situation begins with facing the problem which also signifies the acceptance of trouble; in “The Horses” Muir bravely comes back to the problematic place to solve his worries. The poem opens with the coming of “strange horses” and the speaker recites the previous story of the “the seven days war that put the world to sleep” day by day. The story might take place in any country, for a particular name is never mentioned which allows the reader to easily empathise with the situation. It is only revealed that they live by the sea: “On the third day a warship passed us, heading north / Dead bodies piled on the deck. On the sixth day / A plane plunged over us into the

sea” (1960: 246). After then, the radios were “dumb” and people did not speak to each other in “that old bad world that swallowed its children quick / At one great gulp” (246). There were tractors like “dank sea-monsters” belonging to the old world and people left them on the fields to rust (247). One evening, “the strange horses came” as if coming from an ancient or innocent time; the speaker says, “We had sold our horses in our fathers’ time / To buy new tractors” (247). In the world of fallen people, the horses were strange to them, “As fabulous steeds set on an ancient shield / Or illustrations in a book of knights” (247). In the end, the speaker defines the situation by claiming that “Our life is changed; their coming our beginning” (247). Accordingly, the horses came and changed everything which can be definitely regarded as the re-establishment of Eden.

Conclusion

Through the analysis of the poems evaluated in this study, it can be inferred that Muir always longed for his Eden-like childhood days. After settling in the industrial city, Glasgow, he lost his father, mother and brothers. Then, the loss of his family led him to idealise his past causing a traumatic effect on him which is graphically depicted in his poetry. The happy days of his childhood are epitomized in the setting of his early poem “Childhood” in which “his mother call[s] his name” from the house. In “The Gate” the scenery changes from a space of retreat into a nightmarish space through the fortress imagery, which symbolizes the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood. And he suddenly finds himself in a solitary place like “a lost player upon a hill” and the house of his childhood is “empty.” In the course of the difficult days of war, his perception of space also becomes more narrow and problematic. Even the countryside is haunted by the terror of war and Muir’s feeling of content is no more connected with the country; he is not comfortable in any place. When three poems, “The Wayside Station,” “The River” and “The Refugees” are read successively, the traumatic effect of war and violence on people, especially refugees can be observed clearly; there is no longer a “good town” neither for him

nor for humanity. Through the end of his career, he attempts to get the state of harmony with “One Foot in Eden,” and it is regained in “The Horses.” In the end, Eden, in other words, his romantic past is re-established again.

This paper has shown the importance of space regarding trauma theory by means of analysing Edwin Muir’s poems of trauma, exile and nostalgia and their relation to spaces of sanctuary. Specifically, Muir’s poetry has been analysed mainly from Bachelard’s theory of space to discover firstly the relationship between trauma, nostalgia and space, and secondly, how Muir applied space and spatial elements in his writing on account of the influence of trauma. Obviously, the number of the exemplary poems could be increased, but it would go over the scope of this study. The analysed poems have been intended to exemplify Muir’s connection with trauma and space. His concern with space might not be of primary importance, however, owing to deep analysis, it is seen that his poetry is immensely blended with a powerful sense of space and nostalgia due to the collective and personal trauma. Muir’s poems offer a chance to remember his past, settle what is unsettled, and solve what is not solved; he did write and “heave the groaning world back in its place again.”

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Trauma studies have recently explored the influence of historical event and circumstance on art and how trauma is portrayed; for example, Modernism represents the embodiment of the theme of trauma, alienation and loneliness after the First World War. This connection is also discernible in the poetry of Edwin Muir who was born in 1887 and witnessed various great events of the twentieth century. However, Muir's sense of trauma was not limited to only WWI, but the loss of people and places influenced his verse as well. The theme of loss and migration led Muir to a mythical and nostalgic past as a response to trauma. Due to migration to another city, his struggle with agony was blended with certain places; hence, his poetry elaborates on spatial aspects. In this regard, as it often does lead to feelings of nostalgia, trauma becomes central to understanding Muir's poetry. In the center of Muir's trauma related to his abiding sense of nostalgia is a concentration on places, both historical and mythical. Therefore, the aim of this paper appears to explore the main connection between nostalgia and space in relation to Muir's personal and collective trauma, because one of the major problems in Muir's poetry arises from the relationship between Eden-like past and unsatisfying present.

*This study originated from a necessity to clarify the spatial practices stemming from Muir's collective and personal trauma in his poetry. In the paper, close reading and detailed analysis of the selected poems of Muir have given the opportunity to observe the latent connection between space and trauma. Regarding space theory, Bachelard's book, *Poetics of Space* (1994) has provided the perspective while examining the poems. Furthermore, on the subject of trauma, Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* has been employed to constitute a point of view of how trauma is directly connected with literature. A wounded psyche may originate from a personal or public disaster, accordingly, afflicted with such events writers, explicitly or implicitly, reflect their experiences to writing. In this regard, in the first part of the paper, Muir's personal trauma dating to his childhood years has been analyzed in some poems such as "Childhood" and "The Gate." In the second part, the effects of World Wars have been traced in "The Wayside Station," "The River" and "The Refugees." In the end, it has been observed that Muir regains the state of harmony with "One Foot in Eden" and "The Horses." Hence, this paper has revealed that trauma and space have particular connections, and from this point of view, Muir frequently employed the themes of exile, trauma and loss in search of spaces of sanctuary. Muir's main concern is not on spatial issues, but it has been proved that his poetry is intensely combined with a perception space and nostalgia deriving from his personal and collective wounds. Muir recovers both his wounds and his Eden.*